# 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

## Greeting 1-3

### Paul

Paul writing from a place of authority would be enough, but as we saw last week, it was Paul writing from a place of love and compassion and deep care and commitment for their spiritual well being.  Tackling theological issues and problems within the Corinthian body - which was rather in love with itself culturally - could only happen from a senior player within the church.  The respect that the Corinthians had for Paul would have been real, but had just Timothy or even Sosthenes reached out with the content of this writing the weight would not have been behind it.

### Called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God

Paul was called away from his previous Jewish zealotry with nothing less subtle than the light of Christ blinding him on the road to Damascus [Acts 9:1,6, 15].  You cannot receive that calling and ignore it.  Paul was immediately converting Jews to Christianity [Acts 9:25], yet the Lord had him wait for a time before his missionary ministries started.  In fact, the Lord revealed to Peter that the Gentiles were to be part of the church [Acts 10:21-11:1] before Paul was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles.  Paul’s calling to the gentiles was finally given in Acts 13:1-3.  So Paul writes that he is an apostle of Christ by the will of God, but he knew that will through the direct revelation of the Holy Spirit. The Godhead had a plan.

### Sosthenes our brother

Sosthenes is recorded only in Acts chapter 18:17 and in this greeting, but when we meet him in Acts he is the leader of the synagogue in Corinth.  His position would have been an authoritative one - guaranteed to get the attention of the believers there as he ministered alongside Paul.  Sosthenes’ conversion would have definitely been divisive within the Jewish community, but the members of the Jewish community began beating him in front of a callus Roman leadership (Gallio), who ignored the whole affair as not important to the Roman colony of Corinth.

### To the church of God which is at Corinth

it is important to read this letter in light of the fact that nothing in this list of issues that Paul addresses is causing him to doubt the effectiveness of the salvation of Christ.  The letter is addressed to God’s church in Corinth and despite invasive carnality Paul is writing to carnal, yet sanctified, brothers in Christ.  Being part of the church means that you’re positionally saved and perfected, but conditionally being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-30) and nothing can separate you from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39), and as we’ll see there are some pretty divisive issues that Paul is going to address headlong with his co-heirs in Christ.

### Those who have been sanctified in Christ

For something to be sanctified it means that God has set it aside for Holy use.  This church is reeling in failure, but Paul does not doubt its purpose.  The purpose of the church is not carnality, but holiness; to this end the plan of God is for us to be abiding and walking in the stewardship the Spirit gives us in His holiness.  When an instrument of worship was being sanctified (also called consecrated) in the Old Testament there is a fascinating parallel to this Greek word: it was passive.  The believers did not merit this sanctification, it was a work of Christ, and the body was in Him.

As believers today we are in the same situation: we’re in Christ and in Christ we have our own sanctification.  A holiness that is His holiness.  We’re set apart for His work, just like the church in Corinth was.

### Set aside by calling

As if sanctification were not enough, Paul ties the pattern of calling together with the saints.  They have a common purpose.  The drawing out of this connection is critical because the body in Corinth is going to want to be looking for ways to show that they’re important.  They want to have ways to show status and stature and a commission from the God of the universe seems like a pretty big deal.

### With all who in every place call on the name of our Lord, Their Lord and ours

Paul then let’s them know that they’re identified with the body universal in this calling.  if you are part of something bigger than yourself that can be powerful, but Paul wants them to take that which made them feel important (a calling) and recognize that it is humbling.  Based on the fact we know more letters were written it is possible that they missed the opportunity to learn about humility, but Paul starts with this principle right away.

### Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ

While Grace is a greeting common amongst the Roman culture, Paul uses grace in ways that expand its meaning, and it is important to identify that the way grace was used by Paul is not the sorry 2nd rate definition that is often bandied about today about covering for sins.  Grace is what this church desperately needed because it was a blessing that was unmerited, but it was also a blessing that was unlimited.  Paul extends the gracious greeting with a blessing of peace as well.  Peace is something that the church at large did not have.  The church in Corinth was born in conflict, and the tumultuous ride of the body there indicates that peace was not a normal part of their lives.

## Foundation of Confirmed Salvation for Letter 4-9

### I thank my God always concerning you

Paul has ached and prayed and written and visited to deal with the sins of carnality in Corinth and yet his first statement here past the greeting is that he is thankful for them. Paul and Peter both write a very consistent theme of thankfulness in the New Testament. Trials and suffering, burdens and need are not things that prevent us from thankfulness. In a church with great poverty and apparently some great wealth as well, a thankful attitude would be critical to look past any disparity and into an eternal, heavenly perspective.

### For the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus

Paul is thankful that the church responded to the gospel and received the grace of God in Christ.  The thankfulness is not just personally for the body, but for the work that God has done for them positionally.  The direction of Paul’s attention here establishes them as part of God’s eternal plan, again.  Paul is a masterful writer (empowered and directed by the Spirit) and his focused writing weaves together both purpose and context for our lives.

### That in everything you were enriched in Him

If wealth and poverty divided parts of this body (and certainly the greater community was divided by this issue) then Paul brings the scope of the issue out, widening it, to the point where division could be done away with in unity in Christ.  Paul is thankful that the church in Corinth was enriched indiscriminately and fully in Christ.

### In all speech and in all knowledge

Paul continues his offering of thanks realizing that as a New Testament church being formed in this crucible of history the church at Corinth had been given spiritual gifts.  Gifts of speech and knowledge.  In Corinth, where oratory was part of their pride and social standing having speech from God would have been significant in the eyes of many. On top of that knowledge, the Greek golden goose, would have been prized as well. Paul ties their speech and knowledge back to their salvation and reduces their ability to take credit for this gift.

### Even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you

Paul’s thankfulness run-on sentence continues with this confirmation of the testimony. Paul was not doubting the salvation of the believers there, their lives reflected salvation when he was there, he was a witness.

What does a testimony look like?

### So that you are not lacking in any gift,

As we’ll see in later writing the spiritual gift element of the church’s body life was a major focus.  It was all about the manifestation of the gifts [1 Corinthians 12:1-11] rather than the giver of the gifts [1 Corinthians 12:6].  However, Paul will reign this in and direct them towards selfless love [1 Corinthians 13].

### Awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians [3:4] that when Christ is revealed we will be revealed with Him in glory.  The return of Christ is a liberation from this earth and its wrestlings and carnality, and will be the rapture unto glory.  The day-to-day of the world often distracts us from this eternal hope and perspective, but Paul encourages them with his remembrance of this framing of time and our savior.

The Greek word here carries with it the idea that the Corinthians were patiently, but intensely, waiting for the return of the Lord, and that’s a powerful concept to embrace for us even today.

### Who will also confirm you to the end,

Paul is not uncertain where the power and authority and position of the believer is: it is in Christ.  And Christ will be the one to confirm or establish the believers so that they will be awaiting and faithful until that time.  Instead of putting the onus on the believer to confirm themselves to the end, Christ is the one who is confirming the believer to the end.  His faithfulness and power and strength are the only things we can call on.

### Blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ

How do we know as believers that we’re sanctified?  Because there’s no way we could be blameless of our own accord conditionally.  Our position is rooted powerfully in the eternal work of Christ and so we can walk confidently in that confident knowledge of His complete and adequate job on the cross.

### God is faithful,

Just in case the Corinthians were not sure if God was the God of the Bible: Faithful, trustworthy, powerful, omniscient, omnipresent and so forth, Paul reminds the Corinthians of God’s character which could establish them in eternity, but also care for them in the earthly present.

*When have you found out God’s faithfulness in your own life while being distracted by worries?*

### Through whom you were called into fellowship it His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul circles back around to close off this concept of being called.  This concept is wrapping a section of his introductory thoughts in a care to remind the church that our lives are not our own, our lives are not purposeless, and our lives are part of an eternal plan.